



Iwata Asks: The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask 3D

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Make it in a Year

Hello everyone, this is Satoru Iwata of Nintendo.

Since we weren't able to reveal any new Iwata Asks interviews at all last year, it's really been a while to be able to share with you a new interview.

Last year I fell ill and had undergone surgery. Many of you were probably wondering if my illness was the reason for us not revealing any new Iwata Asks. But to be honest, I've been thinking about taking a break from it so I could recharge, even before I found out about my condition.

From about the end of last year I started thinking about bringing it back up on the table again, and was wondering what would be the right title to bring it back with. It was at that time when I saw people's strong reactions to our announcement that we're making a remake to The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask. I was surprised by those reactions, but now I knew what that title would be.

I hope we can do a good job in trying to convey even a portion of the secrets of a game that deeply struck so many people's hearts. It has become quite a lengthy interview, but I hope you'll follow through to the very end.

Iwata

At long last, you've finished making the game.

Aonuma

Yeah, it was quite a lengthy process.

Iwata

The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask¹ that was originally released for the Nintendo 64 console was released almost exactly 15 years ago, so I have a feeling Aonuma-san has forgotten some bits and pieces.¹. The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask (Nintendo 64): An action adventure game released for the Nintendo 64 console in April 2000. The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask 3D is a remake of this game.

Aonuma

Well it's more than bits and pieces. I've forgotten quite a bit! (laughs)



Iwata

First let's start by asking you about the Nintendo 64 version. If I remember correctly, the development for Majora's Mask began when somebody requested that it be made in one year.

Aonuma

You're right. Since we already made The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time², we had 3D models that we invested a lot of time in to build. This all started by (Shigeru) Miyamoto-san asking whether we could make a game in one year if we repurpose the models. But we were already talking about trying to make Master Quest³ for Nintendo 64DD⁴.² The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time: An action adventure game released for the Nintendo 64 console on Nov. 21, 1998. The story of Majora's Mask takes place a few months after the story of Ocarina of Time. Its game system and graphics were also used for Majora's Mask.³ Master Quest: A special hard mode of the original The Legend of Zelda prepared for those that have cleared the game. The Ocarina of Time: Master Quest was originally developed as a software for the Nintendo 64DD, however this was not released as a Nintendo 64DD title but was later distributed on a special bonus disc for those that have pre-ordered The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker (released Mar. 2003 in North America for GameCube console).⁴ Nintendo 64DD: A peripheral for the Nintendo 64 console sold by RandnetDD. By plugging in this Disc Drive underneath the console, it allowed the system to expand and rewrite a large amount of data storage. This product was in the market only in Japan from 1999 to 2001.

Iwata

At the time when Ocarina of Time came out, there was a plan in the works of releasing Master Quest for 64DD.

Aonuma

Correct. We were told to repurpose the dungeons from Ocarina of Time and make a game out of it, and I was handed the baton to make that happen.

Iwata

Uh-hm.

Aonuma

However, when we made Ocarina of Time, we made those dungeons thinking they were the best we could make. That's when Miyamoto-san asked me to remake them, so I hesitantly obliged...but I couldn't really get into it.

Iwata

To Aonuma-san, you just made the ultimate dungeon, so you didn't want to ruin a perfect formula.

Aonuma

Exactly! So I secretly started making new dungeons that weren't in Ocarina of Time, and that was much more fun to me. So, I grew up the courage to ask Miyamoto-san whether I could make a new game, he replied by saying it's ok if I can make it in a year.

Iwata

Didn't Ocarina of Time take three years to make?

Aonuma

It did.

Iwata

I remember those days very well. Ocarina of Time came out on November 21st, 1998. At around that time I was working on finishing up Smash Bros.⁵ that was due out in January. I was at the Nintendo Kyoto headquarters for a meeting to prepare for its launch, and I bought Ocarina of Time on my way home.⁵ Super Smash Bros.: An action multiplayer game released in Jan. 1999 for the Nintendo 64 console. This game was developed by HAL Laboratory. Mr. Iwata was the president of HAL Laboratory at the time, and contributed in programming development for the game.

Aonuma

Thank you so much! (laughs)

Iwata

So I actually feel like we were working very hard around the same time so I remember it very well. Eventually Ocarina of Time came to be considered the pinnacle of 3D games and was praised all over the world, but on the other hand some people were asking why Zelda games only come out once every three years.

Aonuma

Right, the game's release date was delayed several times.

Iwata

Talking about release delays...that made me remember when Miyamoto-san told me about a time when he visited Kanazawa to go to his school that he graduated from while he was working on Ocarina of Time. While he was there he stopped by a convenience store. Then the store clerk noticed Miyamoto-san and actually got mad at him saying "Miyamoto-san! What are you doing here at a time like this"! (laughs)

Aonuma

(laughs) That clerk must have really been waiting for the game to come out!

Iwata

After making stories like that, Ocarina of Time was finally released after multiple delays. With key learnings like how it took too long for it to come out, Miyamoto-san must have wanted the next game to come out much sooner, like in one year.

Aonuma

I think so.

Iwata

So how did you respond when he asked you to make it in a year? Did you say, "Sure, I can do it"?

Aonuma

No, I was holding my head!

Iwata

I'm sure that you were! (laughs)

Aonuma

I rolled and turned thinking what kind of software I should make, and when I met (Yoshiaki) Koizumi-san⁶ around that time, I asked for his help. He was working on a plan for a different game at the time, one where you would play in a compact game world over and over again. Coincidentally, Ocarina of Time had a system that controlled the time...6. Yoshiaki Koizumi: Codirected The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask for the Nintendo 64 console with Eiji Aonuma. After Majora's Mask, he was involved in the development of 3D Super Mario games such as Super Mario Sunshine (2002), Super Mario Galaxy (2007), as well as Flipnote Studio (2009). Currently works in the EAD Tokyo Software Development Department. He appeared in past Iwata Asks columns such as [Iwata Asks: Super Mario 25th Anniversary Volume 3: Super Mario Developers](#), [Iwata Asks: Super Mario Galaxy Volume 1: The Producer and Director](#), [Iwata Asks: Super Mario Galaxy 2-Volume 2](#), [Iwata Asks: Nintendo DSi Volume 7: Flipnote Studio](#), [Iwata Asks: The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D Original Development Staff-Part 1](#), [Iwata Asks: Super Mario 3D Land Volume 2: The Producers](#), and [Iwata Asks: Super Mario 3D World](#).

Iwata

The sun rose, and there was nightfall. The concept of time existed in that game.

Aonuma

Right, so Koizumi-san told me that he would help me out if he could use that system of time passing to make a game where you would be playing the same moments in time over and over again.

Iwata

That...sounds like you're bartering within the company! (laughs)

Aonuma

(laughs) From there, the "Three-Day System"⁷ was born. It's where you would be playing the same three days over and over again.⁷ Three-Day System: When three days pass in-game, the moon will fall and destroy the world, therefore this is a system where the player has to control time and repeat those three days over and over again to complete the game.

Iwata

You needed a completely new idea to make something in such a short turnaround like one year, and that was the "Three-Day System".

Aonuma

Right. But at first, it was one week.

Iwata

Three days was originally one week?

Aonuma

That's right. But when you returned to the first day it was like "Do I have to go through an entire week again...", so we thought three days would be just right.

Iwata

Wait, it got decided just like that? (laughs)

Aonuma

(laughs) In this game the townspeople do different things each day and many different things happen, but when the timespan becomes a week, that's just too much to remember. You can't simply remember who's where doing what on which day.

Iwata

Moreover, you probably wouldn't have been able to make it in a year if you were aiming to make a game filled with so much content for seven days.

Aonuma

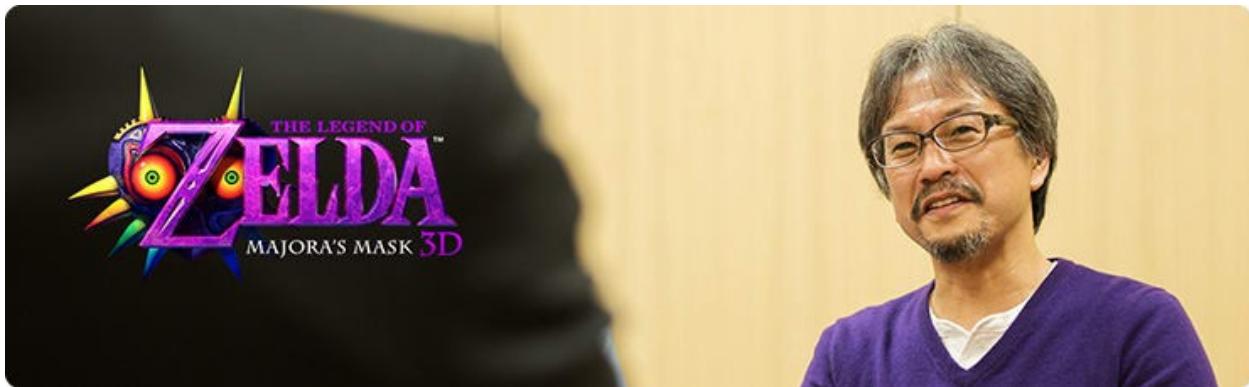
Right, we never would have been able to do it. We felt it would be best to make it a three-step process, and we compressed all sorts of things we had planned for over a week into three days.

Iwata

That's how it led to the game feeling like it's packed to the gills with content. You squished all sorts of ideas you were originally planning to use in a week into only three days.

Aonuma

I think so.



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From Hospitality to a Challenge

Iwata

By the way, why masks?

Aonuma

The development of Ocarina of Time was so long, we were able to put in a whole lot of different elements into that game. Out of those, there were ideas that weren't fully utilized, and ones that weren't used to their full potential. One of those was the mask salesman.⁸ The mask salesman: In the story of Majora's Mask, he says he is the original owner of Majora's Mask. He asks Link to retrieve Majora's Mask which was stolen by Skull Kid. He may seem laid-back; however there is a scary essence about his personality that is hard to read. He also acts as a guide for the Japanese Official The Legend of Zelda account (@ZeldaOfficialJP). There's also a Happy Mask Salesman that appears in Ocarina of Time, but if they are the same person remains a mystery.

Iwata

When Link wears the masks, sometimes the reactions of whoever he's talking to change.

Aonuma

That's right. So in Majora's Mask we felt it would be fun if Link himself transforms whenever he puts on those masks.

Iwata

Before that Link was never able to transform.

Aonuma

Right. As a basis of Zelda games, you're able to use items to do all sorts of different things, and we felt it would be a lot of fun if Link would acquire all these abilities by putting on these different masks. We felt that would expand the gameplay. So we made the game so Link could transform into Deku Link to fly in the air, Goron Link to roll across land, and Zora Link so that he could swim underwater. We also gave each of them a storyline.

Iwata

You covered land, sea and air! (laughs)

Aonuma

We did. Once we decided we were going with masks, everything just came into place.

Iwata

Like all the pieces coming together.

Aonuma

That's exactly it.

Iwata

It must have felt great when everything came into place.

Aonuma

Well, we really didn't have time so things had to fall in place! (laughs)

Iwata

That's true! (laughs) But that goes to show how a deadline's important.

Aonuma

I guess so. (laughs wryly) I'm not saying it's a case of "A cornered mouse will bite the cat", but we soldiered on with a mindset that we had to do it.

Iwata

I do know of many situations where things didn't go well because people were on such tight deadlines. But in the case of Majora's Mask, it seems to me that having less time actually benefited its development.

Aonuma

Right.

Iwata

Why did that happen?

Aonuma

Even with Ocarina of Time, we didn't go out making it thinking it would take three years to make. Really. But then, we started to get focused in on the



details...

Iwata

That's why the release date moved every time you were asked about it, and Miyamoto-san got yelled at in a convenience store! (laughs)

Aonuma

I guess so! (laughs) At that time we were making Ocarina of Time wanting to be really proud of our work. We wanted to go out with it with our chests up high, harking to the world that this is the 3D Zelda game. We really were making the game with all our hearts into it. Even if it took a long time, we wanted to put in everything we had.

Iwata

As a result of that, you ran into a situation where you made a lot of delicious dishes but had run out of places on the table to put them on.

Aonuma

We did. Because of that, there was a sense of unfulfillment among the staff, where a lot of us wanted to do things differently with certain elements from Ocarina of Time, and also wanting to do things they weren't able to before. If we gathered all new staff to work on it, it would have been impossible to make in only one year.

Iwata

You were fueled by your regrets of what you made but weren't able to fully use to fruition. Because you were fueled by it, you were able to put on a

bunch of new ideas on top of the "Three-Days System" and they all fit together nicely. That's why you were able to make something with so much content in only a year.

Aonuma

I suppose so. Also...I was younger back then.

Iwata

It's been 15 years.

Aonuma

At the time when I was told I had to make it in a year, I was extremely focused on thinking how great it would be if we could make it happen, and how disappointed I would be if I couldn't do it. I started working on the game with that kind of mindset, but towards the end of the game's development, we had to work under severe time constraints. That's when Miyamoto-san told me that we could delay the game's release. That's when I...

Iwata

Did you get angry?

Aonuma

I did! I got mad. I said to him, pretty loudly, "There's no way we can do that now!"

Iwata

Oh wow! (laughs)

Aonuma

I also remember telling him "We'll definitely make this in one year!" Looking back at it now, I said something unbelievable to my boss!

Iwata

You really were young! (laughs)

Aonuma

Yeah. Miyamoto-san did tell us to make it in a year but he must have been concerned towards the end.

Iwata

He must have been worried that you were all exhausted.

Aonuma

I suppose. And at that time, I did have a sense that I was being pushed on by something strange.

Iwata

You may have been wearing one of those masks! (laughs)

Aonuma

I had a dream about it.

Iwata

What kind of a dream was it?

Aonuma

It was a dream about being chased by a Deku.

Iwata

Oh, a dream where you were being chased around? (laughs)

Aonuma

I was thinking about an event for the Deku, and have been trying to figure out what to do with it. I thought of it at home, and Dekus appeared in my dream. I woke up screaming! I went to work the next day and that's when (Takumi) Kawagoe-san⁹ told me that he finished making a movie for the Dekus, so I had him show it to me....and that movie was exactly like my dream!⁹ Takumi Kawagoe: Works in Software Planning & Development Department of Nintendo. He was in charge of Cinematic Sequence for The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask for Nintendo 64 console. He appeared in [Iwata Asks: Twilight Princess](#) and [Iwata Asks: The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D Original Development Staff-Part 1](#).

Iwata

(laughs)

Aonuma

I even told him "how do you know my dream?" (laughs) That's how put up against the edge I was back then.

Iwata

Perhaps you were possessed by something.

Aonuma

Possibly.

Iwata

By the way, the reaction when we announced The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask 3D¹⁰ was amazing, right?¹⁰ Announcement of The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask 3D: The release of this game was announced globally on [Nintendo Direct 11.5.2014](#).

Aonuma

It sure was.

Iwata

We never worked on a remake for Majora's Mask until now, so we did go in thinking that the reactions would be somewhat positive. But to be honest,

the reactions we received were much stronger than we had anticipated.



Why do you think that was the case?

Aonuma

I think that's because Majora's Mask is the kind of game that presents players with a challenge.

Iwata

What? It's a challenge to our customers? (laughs)

Aonuma

When we talked about The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time¹¹ in a previous Iwata Asks, we talked about hospitality.¹¹ The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3DS: This is an action adventure game released for the Nintendo 3DS console on June 2011.

Iwata

It was about "hospitality on the attack"¹².¹² Hospitality on the attack: Mentioned in Iwata Asks: The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D Original Development Staff-Part 2. The developers stated that when they replayed the Ocarina of Time for Nintendo 64 to get references for remaking the game for the 3DS, they mentioned that they "sensed an immense amount of hospitality" when they played through it for the first time in a while.

Aonuma

But Majora's Mask isn't like that. It's all a challenge to our players. It's like we're saying to them "can you clear this?"

Iwata

It shifted from hospitality to a challenge.

Aonuma

It was something like until then you were welcomed with open arms being invited to come in, and now you're being told at the door to go home if you don't have what it takes! (laughs)

Iwata

That might be true. When I played the game when it came out, it was like the game itself was screaming out to me, questioning me whether I had the dedication to play forward.

Aonuma

That's because we didn't put in any kind of elements where we show people how to play this game. The game was made for those who have played

Ocarina of Time, so I felt like there wasn't a need for step-by-step instructions.

Iwata

It was like "clear it if you can".

Aonuma

So those who have played it still strongly remember how the game felt like it was a challenge, even though 15 years had passed. That's probably why it led to such a strong reaction.

Iwata

I see. Well, let's end talking about the Nintendo 64 version, and start talking about this new game.

Aonuma

Sure!



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Didn't Want to Open That Lid

Iwata

Thank you so much for your patience everyone. Shall we start with introductions?

Ooiwa

I'm Mikiharu Ooiwa of GREZZO Co., Ltd.¹³ I wasn't from the beginning, but I was tasked on the role of director for Majora's Mask 3D.



13. GREZZO: A game development company established in 2006 based in Tokyo. After developing The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D, they worked on The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask 3D. For more details on Ocarina of Time 3D, visit [Iwata Asks: The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D Development Staff](#).

Iwata

What do you mean by "tasked on"?

Aonuma

I requested that a director role be made mid way during development. For a while I didn't think there was a need for one.

Iwata

Ah, I get it. At first, you thought you didn't need a director since this game had an original to work off of.

Aonuma

There was no director when we made Ocarina of Time 3D. But that wasn't the case at all when we started working on this game! (laughs)

Ooiwa

That's right! (laughs)

Iwata

Aonuma-san, I don't think we need you to introduce yourself at this point. (laughs) So Yamamura-san, take it away.

Yamamura

Hi, I'm Tomohiro Yamamura of the Software Planning & Development Department (SPD). I worked as the liaison on the SPD side. My job was to compile Aonuma-san's wishes on what he wants to do with the game in an easy to understand way, tell that to Ooiwa-san at GREZZO, taking Ooiwa-

san's response, review it myself to see if it's ok, then relay that info back to



Aonuma-san.

Iwata

You basically worked as the interpreter even though everyone spoke Japanese.

Yamamura

I guess so! (laughs) I really was an interpreter.

Sano

Hi there, I'm Tomomi Sano, also from SPD. Like Yamamura-san, I worked as the Nintendo liaison for this title. Although for me, I joined during the latter half of development so most of the components were already finished. So my role was to review the existing issues with the game that were found by Mario Club¹⁴, and if there were moments where it seemed like the game was putting on too much of a challenge like what they were saying just a while ago, I went over those areas from a player's perspective and made recommendations on whether we should fix certain issues or leave them as is since they add as a part of the challenging flavor to the game.



14. Mario Club: A company that debugs and tests Nintendo games in development.

Aonuma

You say "from a player's perspective" Sano-san, but that's exactly the case since you actually played the Nintendo 64 version yourself when it was out, as one of our customers. So whenever I wondered what it would feel like from a fan, I always asked Sano-san.

Sano

I was originally a fan of the Nintendo 64 version so I played it when it was out, but...I was one of those that lost the challenge! (laughs)

Iwata

You couldn't clear the game?

Sano

Unfortunately, no.

Iwata

Well, so let me ask the group; how did recreating that "challenging" game



Majora's Mask get started?

Aonuma

Here again, it came from Miyamoto-san. He told me one day "let's release Majora's Mask for Nintendo 3DS." Sano-san mentioned how she lost the challenge, and I think Miyamoto-san feels quite strongly that there are quite a lot of people like her, who gave up on the Nintendo 64 version part way through the journey. He probably felt that it was such a shame in how we put in so much in the game, but then people aren't able to see them because they weren't able to get there. Of course, we were the ones who challenged the players if they could clear these mysteries in the first place! (laughs)

Iwata

Well, it did turn from hospitality into a challenge! (laughs)

Aonuma

Well, when I was told that by Mr. Miyamoto, all I could say was "you're absolutely right." An added benefit of releasing it for the Nintendo 3DS was that if you get stuck somewhere in the game, you could just close the lid and put it in sleep mode¹⁵, so it was all the more reason to work on Majora's Mask. However, I couldn't just simply say "yes, I'll do it." 15. Sleep mode: This mode is when a 3DS console is closed shut while it is on. By doing so, the device will save energy, making it easier to continue playing games after the console is opened up again.

Iwata

Now why is that?

Aonuma

I said this before, but it was one of those games where I was able to do quite a bit because I was much younger.

Iwata

Right.

Aonuma

So I didn't want to open that lid again! (laughs)

Iwata

What do you mean you didn't want to open the lid! (laughs)

Aonuma

I knew that as soon as I opened it I would break out in cold sweat! (laughs)

Everyone

(laughs)

Iwata

So Aonuma-san, you wanted to keep it closed forever?

Aonuma

As in a "please pretend it didn't happen" kind of way! (laughs) Of course we're not allowed to pretend that it didn't happen, but I didn't want to work on another iteration. But I was met by Miyamoto-san's firm "nope".

Iwata

He told you to make it in a year for the Nintendo 64 version, and told you to not run away for the 3DS version. Miyamoto-san's such a strict man!

(laughs)

Aonuma

Miyamoto-san also told me to play everything over again and ask myself if everything was all right the way it was. He wanted me to check every aspect of the game, and adjust it to where players today can enjoy it.

Iwata

That's like putting salt on your wounds. (laughs)

Aonuma

It's an old wound from 15 years ago! (laughs) So, I put up enough courage to play everything over again.

Iwata

As you were breaking out in cold sweat? (laughs)

Aonuma

Right! (laughs) But then I found a bunch of things that made me say "what in the world?!"

Iwata

"What in the world?" (laughs) It's not something you typically say to something you created.

Aonuma

Usually Zelda games are made in a way that whenever you get a hunch that there's something on the other side of the curve, that hunch will be enough for you to gather up enough willpower to move forward, even when there's a rough road ahead. But in the case of this Nintendo 64 version of Majora's Mask, when you think there's something ahead and you get there, there's nothing. There are no answers there that you were hoping to find.



Iwata

At that point you'd give up.

Aonuma

Yeah. There even are some things where there are no hints at all. There were quite a few things that no one was able to find.

Iwata

As Miyamoto-san said, it feels like such a waste when no one can find and experience what you spent a lot of effort on putting into the game.

Aonuma

Exactly. So thinking about it now, I must have been possessed at the time thinking what I've done.

Iwata

Sano-san, as one of the players, did you find those things in the game?

Sano

I think there were a lot. Like when you messed up something, you can accept that if it's because your skill wasn't good enough. But with that game there were parts where you didn't know why you couldn't clear certain areas. That made it hard to come to terms when you failed a challenge.

Iwata

"When something didn't work out, it's easy for players to admit that it's their own fault." That's the way games should be, and that should be the development philosophy here at Nintendo.

Aonuma

You're right. But that wasn't always the case with the Nintendo 64 version. It probably won't be a good idea if we had today's player try out the original version. So that's why we decided to make a "what in the world" list.

Iwata

So you decided to make a list of everything that Aonuma-san felt "what in the world?!"

Aonuma

That's right.



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The "What in The World" List

Iwata

So development started when you passed on the "what in the world" list to Ooiwa-san at GREZZO?

Ooiwa

Well, we didn't have that list when we first started working on the game, so at first we played the Nintendo 64 version through and through. We started off by playing in a lot of different ways, captured video, and made a list. Then we heard from Aonuma-san that he wanted to add in new elements.

Iwata

So from the beginning, he wanted to put in new ways to play, rather than making a simple remake of the Nintendo 64 version.

Ooiwa

Exactly. So within our team we brainstormed on all sorts of new ideas that could be put into the game world of Majora's Mask. We presented our ideas to Miyamoto-san through Aonuma-san towards the end of 2011.

Iwata

That's about six months after Ocarina of Time 3D has been released. Didn't you get nervous having heard that you had to present to Miyamoto-san?

Ooiwa

Oh, my heart was pounding while waiting for the response! (laughs) But thankfully the presentation ended just fine. It was at a later time when we received the "what in the world" list, which to us was like a challenge of



itself.

Iwata

What was then a challenge to the players was now a challenge to the developers.

Ooiwa

That's exactly it! (laughs)

Yamamura

That "what in the world" list was first drafted by Aonuma-san, which then I played those parts through to confirm, and had Mario Club play it out too. There were new "what in the world" things from those steps as well, and we compiled them all in one list.

Iwata

So the "what in the world" list went through an upgrade since it left Aonuma-san's hands.

Yamamura

Right! (laughs) (spread hands widely top to bottom, as if holding a big batch of paper) We handed it all to GREZZO and asked them "We have all these points that need to be addressed. From where should we get started?" That's when the real development began.

Ooiwa

When we had taken a look at the "what in the world" list, Aonuma-san's confessions were written everywhere! (laughs)

Iwata

Confessions? (laughs)

Aonuma

I wrote in a bunch of comments on where I thought things weren't good. Like, "I'm sorry that this comes from the one that made it this way, but..."

Ooiwa

That was on the top of every list.

Aonuma

And "At the time, I think there was something wrong with me..."

Ooiwa

He said something similar every time we had a meeting! (laughs)

Yamamura

"What in the world" was something that he said all the time! (laughs)

Aonuma

Every time a "what in the world" came up, I always apologized and made excuses on why I did what I did at the time. I was probably able to do that because I thoroughly replayed the game first, and that I had a clear idea on what needed to be accomplished.

Iwata

You were able to see a clear direction on how to create it for the Nintendo 3DS.

Aonuma

That's correct, but the sheer amount was astounding. Of course, at the time I must have been keeping an eye on everything, so I thought to myself why were there so many things that I wanted to fix.

Iwata

I also have a lot of things that I made in the past where I would do things differently if I had the chance! (laughs)

Aonuma

But I have so many! It's a lot! (laughs)

Iwata

Why are you saying it so proudly! (laughs)

Everyone

(laughs)

Aonuma

I knew I didn't want to open the lid from the get go, and it turned out that my instincts were correct.

Ooiwa

But think about it this way, you were able to fix every "what in the world" in the game because we had this opportunity.

Aonuma

I guess you're right. That's because there were people who were able to make things right... Thank you so much for all you've done.

Ooiwa

Oh no, you're very welcome! (laughs)

Iwata

How does it feel cleaning up after someone's mess?

Ooiwa

I always felt like it was a challenge bestowed upon our team because of the trust and rapport we established when we worked on Ocarina of Time 3D.

Iwata

Because you were trusted, you were given a challenge.

Aonuma

Right, I think because we had GREZZO work on the remake of Ocarina of Time 3D, they had a deep understanding of the program, so we knew they could get a clear understanding of Majora's Mask once they played it. A development approach like this one was only made possible because GREZZO worked on the remake of Ocarina of Time 3D.



Yamamura

They were also very passionate and were highly motivated to the task, even to the small details. So we were able to ask them to work on it with confidence.

Ooiwa

Thank you for the kind words, those words will further raise the motivations of all our team members!

Aonuma

You basically re-experienced what we've been through 15 years ago. We travelled from Ocarina of Time to Majora's Mask.

Ooiwa

Oh you're right. That's definitely true! (laughs)

Iwata

By the way, Aonuma-san, while you were working on Majora's Mask 3D, you were also working simultaneously on *A Link Between Worlds*¹⁶.¹⁶ The Legend of Zelda: *A Link Between Worlds*: An action adventure game released for 3DS consoles in Nov. 22 2013.

Aonuma

Right. To be honest, I wanted to only focus on working on Majora's Mask 3D if I could have.

Iwata

But *A Link Between Worlds* was a completely new game, unlike Majora's Mask 3D.

Aonuma

So eventually my hands got tied up, so I asked Ooiwa-san to take on the role of director, a role which I couldn't fill at the time.

Iwata

Ooiwa-san said that he was tasked on the role of director in the beginning of this interview, but now we find out how that came to be.

Ooiwa

Oh I see, that's how it all came to be.

Iwata

What? Ooiwa-san, you didn't know about it until now?

Ooiwa

No, I did not!

Aonuma

So as I was making *A Link Between Worlds*, I noticed things that could be put in Majora's Mask.

Iwata

Ah, I see.

Aonuma

I had it happen before. Whenever I work on multiple titles at once, I find things like that.

Iwata

So as you were checking off your "what in the world" list one by one, you also had to work on new themes that arose from them working on A Link Between Worlds.

Ooiwa

Exactly.

Iwata

It makes sense that it took so long to develop.

Aonuma

Because we worked on it for such a long time, we're told new things, like support for the New Nintendo 3DS¹⁷.17. New Nintendo 3DS: A new member of the Nintendo 3DS family. The New Nintendo 3DS XL was released on Feb. 13, 2015 in North America. New features such as Face-tracking 3D, the C-stick, and built-in amiibo support have been added, and also has more processing power compared to its predecessor. Click the following link for more information <http://www.nintendo.com/3ds/new-nintendo-3ds/>.

Iwata

Right! (laughs)



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"Moon Gazing" With the C-Stick

Iwata

Ooiwa-san, when did you first hear about the New Nintendo 3DS system?

Ooiwa

We were already in the second half of the development stage. We finished the porting processes in general and were starting to incorporate the new challenging elements one by one. That's why we usually had our meetings at the GREZZO office in Tokyo around that time, but one day out of the blue, you had asked us, "How about having a meeting in Kyoto for a change?"

Iwata

Now that's a suspicious invitation! (laughs)

Ooiwa

It was! (laughs) However, at the time, we thought, "It isn't bad to have meetings in Kyoto once in a while." So we decided to take up the offer.

Iwata

At the time, you probably thought "Yes, we get to visit Kyoto for the first time in a long time!" all the while being oblivious to the workload that awaited you. (laughs)

Ooiwa

That's right! (laughs) After we got there, we were shown the New Nintendo 3DS.

Yamamura

The system wasn't announced yet, so we asked you to come all the way to Kyoto.

Aonuma

And when they arrived, I immediately requested to add a feature to spin the camera with the C-Stick¹⁸ in-game.¹⁸ C-stick:An analog stick newly added on the left side above the A B X Y buttons on New Nintendo 3DS consoles.

Ooiwa

I was surprised that you asked for such a request at that timing! (laughs)

Aonuma

Sorry about that, but I really wanted to move the camera around in this game. We integrated the free-to-control camera for the first time in *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*¹⁹, and from that experience I knew how well it felt when I was able to use that.¹⁹ *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*: An action adventure game released on Mar. 2003 for the GameCube console.

Ooiwa

So, after that I brought back a large task given by Aonuma-san. However, at the time, the New Nintendo 3DS system was still confidential, so we

couldn't talk about it to most of our staff. We had to gather up a limited number of people, such as the programmers in charge, and worked on this



task in a hush-hush manner.

Iwata

"Hush-hush", huh! (laughs)

Ooiwa

But thanks to integrating this feature, players can now see the icon of this game, the Moon, while they move Link around.

Aonuma

And you couldn't do that in the Nintendo 64 version. You have an idea that the moon is falling lower, but you couldn't really see it.

Sano

You expect the Moon to look bigger on the third day, but you can't really see it. But now, you can enjoy gazing at the Moon whenever you want! (laughs)

Aonuma

It's really nice, isn't it? (laughs)

Iwata

But wasn't it hard to add the camera rotation feature after you had reached near the end of the development process?

Ooiwa

It was. After all, Majora's Mask has many types of programming that determines the camera controls.

Iwata

So it's a system where there are many different types of camera programs depending on the scene?

Yamamura

That's right. There are various types of camera programs that adjust to match different scenes like climbing ladders and flying as Deku Link. Even compared to Ocarina of Time, there are quite a number of them.

Ooiwa

This is why we had to experiment on an enormous scale of how we could combine the many camera programs with the camera controls of the C-stick.

Yamamura

Above that, we needed to consider Link's transformations. The default Link and Goron Link are different heights, so the height of the cameras are different, too.

Ooiwa

And by being able to move the camera around freely, you're now able to see stuff that you weren't supposed to see...

Iwata

So those are the problems you faced when integrating the C-stick.

Ooiwa

Right, so unexpected problems appeared here and there, so it wasn't an easy task.

Iwata

I see. I think I learned another reason why developing this game took such a long time! (laughs)

Aonuma

But we gained a tremendous result for pulling through, didn't we?

Ooiwa

Definitely.

Aonuma

By being able to move the camera with the C-stick, we were able to clearly show that Majora's Mask was reborn.

Iwata

So although it was a hard task, the efforts paid off, and it was able to contribute greatly to the appeal of the game.

Ooiwa

I believe so.

Iwata

By the way, the New Nintendo 3DS has a face-tracking 3D feature²⁰, but how well does that match up with Majora's Mask 3D? Face-tracking 3D: One of the new features of New Nintendo 3DS consoles. A camera automatically tracks and adjusts to where the user's face is, so the 3D will look stable even if they move around.

Aonuma

Well, when you play a Zelda game, you can't really sit still.

Iwata

It's true that you naturally start moving your body while you play a fun action game.

Aonuma

So for the Nintendo 3DS systems, the 3D effects looked blurry when I played with it. However, when I heard about the face-tracking 3D feature being integrated into the New Nintendo 3DS systems, I was really excited about this feature. When I was playing Ocarina of Time 3D, the 3D effects did get a little blurry occasionally, however this never happened when I played with the New Nintendo 3DS system, so I was able to play without stress, even with the 3D effects on.

Iwata

When you replay games that have already released with the New Nintendo 3DS system, doesn't it feel like you're playing a whole different game?

Aonuma

It does.

Iwata

When I first received a New Nintendo 3DS system, I first replayed Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon for 3DS²¹, and thought, "Oh, this is a completely different game," and I felt that the appeal of other games that utilized 3D like Kid Icarus: Uprising²², Ocarina of Time 3D, Mario Kart 7²³, and Super Mario 3D Land²⁴ improved drastically. It looked so good that it made me want to apologize for not having the 3D functions work this greatly when we first released the Nintendo 3DS system. Of course, such technology was not available when we released the original Nintendo 3DS, so it was impossible to integrate it at the time. I hope people will forget their expectations of 3D from the past, and replay on the New Nintendo 3DS systems the 3DS games they played before.²¹ Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon for Nintendo 3DS: An action adventure game released on Mar. 2013 for Nintendo 3DS consoles.²² Kid Icarus: Uprising: An action shooting game released for Nintendo 3DS consoles in Mar. 2012.²³ Mario Kart 7: An action racing game released for Nintendo 3DS consoles in Dec. 2011.²⁴ Super Mario 3D Land: A 3D action game released for Nintendo 3DS consoles in Nov. 2011.

Aonuma

Yes, I agree that there is that much of a difference. Reeling the topic back to Majora's Mask 3D, I have to admit that it probably took so long to develop this game partially because we were waiting for the New Nintendo 3DS systems to arrive! (laughs)

Iwata

Oh, so that's how you'll explain why it took so long! (laughs) So you're saying that because you were waiting for the New Nintendo 3DS, you took some time in developing this game?

Aonuma

Well, it really doesn't get blurry when you spin the camera, and it really opened up the tight-spaced feeling players might have felt from the world of Majora's Mask. Because we spent so much time working on this game, we were able to have this pleasant encounter.

Iwata

Was there anything that improved with the stereoscopic view?

Yamamura

Basically, the world of Majora's Mask has a very complex design. From the buildings in the town to the dungeons, the stereoscopic views make it easier to detect your directions forward and backward, as well as above and below, so I believe it contributed to help players figure out where they need



to go.

Aonuma

For example, when Deku Link flies, the stereoscopic view makes it easier to detect the location of where to land. So being able to view things stereoscopically has positively contributed to this game in many ways.

Ooiwa

The gyro sensor²⁵ controls are really good, too. Come to think of it, wasn't Aonuma-san playing the mini game, Clock Town's Famous Archery Game, in a recently uploaded video?²⁵ Gyro sensor: A sensor included in Nintendo 3DS, Nintendo 2DS and New Nintendo 3DS consoles which tracks the angle and the rotation speed of the console.

Aonuma

Ohhhh, that's right. Termina Quest²⁶, right? (laughs)²⁶ Eiji Aonuma's Termina Quest: A gameplay walk-through video posted on the Japanese official website for Majora's Mask 3D and the [Japanese Nintendo official YouTube channel](#). The videos show Eiji Aonuma attempting mini games that are in Majora's Mask 3D.

Ooiwa

It only took you three tries to get a perfect score. I shouted "Yes!" when you accomplished that! (laughs)

Aonuma

To be honest, I was surprised myself. I was never able to get a perfect score in the Nintendo 64 version.

Iwata

Did the gyro controls work well with this game?

Aonuma

I believe so. The gyro control for the 3DS is very stable. Plus, the wonderful timing adjustments made by the developers of GREZZO most likely contributed to me getting a perfect score on the third try.

Ooiwa

We did make quite an amount of adjustments for the archery game. So, when I shouted "Yes!" that was also because I knew our adjustments worked! (laughs)



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"Every Boss Stage is Weird"

Iwata

Sano-san, as a person that played the Nintendo 64 version of this game...and giving up on it, how did you think about the challenges in the newly created Majora's Mask 3D?

Sano

For this time, I did fail at the same scenes that I have failed at in the Nintendo 64 version. But, now I feel like it's because I'm not that skilled in playing video games to begin with, so I felt that I was able to accept defeat.

Iwata

So you've accepted your failures because you were convinced that they were your fault. That's why you were motivated to keep going.

Sano

Right. Also, in the Nintendo 64 version, there were scenes where I couldn't understand why I failed, so I couldn't get the motivation to keep trying. In the 3DS version, however, I felt that I rarely ran into these situations.

Aonuma

You feel that it's less unreasonable, right?

Sano

That's right. So, even if I never worked on this project and purchased this game as a consumer, I think I would enjoy the game because I can now understand my mistakes better.

Iwata

So it may sound impossible when the game is described as being as challenging as the Nintendo 64 version, and at the same time it may seem easier to play, but what it really means is that the unreasonableness of the Nintendo 64 version has been taken out, but the challenge is still there.

Aonuma

That's absolutely right. I repetitively told the staff to never make this game easier. For example, when you fight the bosses, I believe that you gain true satisfaction after you try many different things, and finally take the right steps to defeat it.

Iwata

Also, the thrill of not having enough time to get things done in three days is what defines this game, so if that's taken out it'll turn into an unmemorable game.

Sano

Well, if you clear the game without having the Moon fall from the sky at least once, it wouldn't leave a strong impression either.



Aonuma

I agree! (laughs)

Yamamura

From stuff like that, I think the staff was able to get a consensus of this game in the early stages of development. We spent a lot of time discussing what needs to be fixed, and what shouldn't.

Ooiwa

Based off of the "what in the world" list! (laughs)

Yamamura

Yeah. So for the sake of making it easier for the players to solve the riddles, an easy way is to present the obvious answers right in front of them, but we believed that that should never happen.

Iwata

If that happened, it wouldn't feel like you're doing the solving. Without the solving element, it cannot be a Zelda game, right?

Everyone

(Nods their heads in agreement.)

Iwata

If the challenges are easy, and the "se-sa-me-sa~uce♪"²⁷ sound effect plays in the background, you wouldn't feel happy at all! (laughs)²⁷ "Se-sa-me-sa~uce♪" (go-ma-da-re~): Popular in Japan, this is the unofficial lyrics for the fanfare sound effect that plays when you find important items from places like treasure boxes in-game.

All

(Laughs)

Yamamura

So, instead of giving out or forcing the answers onto the players, we focused our energy on how well we can communicate the meanings of the missions to the players. By doing this, I think we were able to make the challenges

more comprehensible while keeping the same level of challenge as the Nintendo 64 version.

Aonuma

A great example for this are the boss battles.

Ooiwa

That's right; Aonuma-san said that he wanted to change all of the boss battles.

Aonuma

I've been saying that all of the boss battles are weird. All of them. When you first face a boss, it is natural to start looking for its weakness so you can figure out where to attack it. However, in the Nintendo 64 version of this game, you couldn't see the weaknesses at all.

Iwata

This is because you created this game as a challenge for the users to figure it out themselves, right?

Aonuma

This would be all right if the users understood this while they were fighting. However, this turned into a game where players won by randomly attacking the boss, without really figuring out what was its weakness.

Ooiwa

I personally wanted to fix this too. After I found out we had the same concerns, we reconstructed the battles by focusing on making the objective easier to understand, ensuring that there is the "a-ha" moment for the players, and the strategic elements that are needed to take them down wherever possible.

Iwata

So, you've remade every single boss fight?

Aonuma

Every single one of them. However, their models are virtually the same as the Nintendo 64 version.

Yamamura

However, the bosses' movements and strategies to take them down have all changed, so it took about the same effort as creating the stages from scratch.

Iwata

Well you say that quite frankly, even though this is supposed to be a remake.

Yamamura

(Laughs) We put in that much effort in creating this game, so it should be more convenient to play for players that are new to this game. It should also be refreshing to play for those that have played the Nintendo 64 version.

Aonuma

So this time, the GREZZO development team really contributed above and beyond what it takes to make a remake.

Ooiwa

In addition to boss battles, we were able to share several ideas this time around, too.

Aonuma

But there were some suggestions that seemed to be over the top! (laughs)

Ooiwa

Oh, sorry about that! (laughs) You did keep us on track, though.

Aonuma

The development team had a lot of motivation, so when they showed me some of their ideas, I had to turn down quite a few of them because it was so over the top. On the other hand, they've also created things that we've never noticed from our end.

Ooiwa

This was mentioned earlier, but we thought it would be a waste if the players didn't discover the fun elements of the game, so we focused on every detail in the game when we were improving and adjusting the contents. For example, we made it so The Bombers²⁸ will give you some hints, and improved The Bombers' Notebook²⁹.28. The Bombers: The Bombers Secret Society of Justice's goal is to do good deeds and make people happy. Led by Jim, the society has five young boys as members.29. The Bombers' Notebook:This is an item that signifies your admission into the Bombers Secret Society of Justice. This notebook automatically fills in the schedules of troubled people.

Aonuma

The Bombers in Clock Town consist of five young boys, and they tell you that they're collecting information about the town. However, in the Nintendo 64 version, they didn't give you any useful information. So players

might've thought, "What's the point of these kids?!" (laughs)



Iwata

How can you say that when you're their original creator? (laughs)

Everyone

(laughs)

Aonuma

So after I felt those regrets, we decided to make these kids more active in the 3DS version.

Ooiwa

There are many events that occur in the town, but it was easy to miss what was going on in the Nintendo 64 version.

Aonuma

And above that, events happen on a specific time, so if you're not in the area when the event happens, you will end your experience without ever knowing that such events existed.

Ooiwa

So this is why we had the Bombers give out hints.

Aonuma

Also, the Bombers' Notebook has improved quite a bit. The double screens on 3DS systems make it easy to read. You can get much more information out of it, and it now even has an alarm system that would alert you when specific events take place. That's really convenient, right?

Ooiwa

Right. Because they have finally realized their mission as a secret society, they actually started collecting information. (laugh)

Iwata

So now no one will think "What's the point of these kids?!" when they run into the Bombers in this version of the game.

Aonuma

My perspective about these kids completely changed. This time, I think, "Wow, you kids are quite useful!" (laughs)

Everyone

(laughs)



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"Adding New Discoveries"

Iwata

By the way, Aonuma-san, it is very rare to create a new game from scratch in one year, especially for massive games like the Zelda series, but I haven't really heard of anyone taking three times as long as that original game either in order to make the remake.

Aonuma

Oh, I'm sorry about that! (laughs)

Iwata

Isn't that boast worthy, though?! (laughs)

Aonuma

Boast? Well, probably I shouldn't... (laughs)

Iwata

But after listening to you all today, I think I have a better understanding of why it took so long to finish this game.

Aonuma

Although this is technically a remake, we've crammed in a ton of new elements into this game.

Iwata

To close off this interview, I would like to ask each one of you to comment on what makes this game appealing. Can we start off with Sano-san?

Sano

Wait, I'm first?!! (laughs) Ummmm...let's see...

Iwata

Well, you can ask someone else to take your turn too, only once though!
(laughs)

Everyone

(laughs)

Sano

Well, if I do pass my turn with this group...

Iwata

...Wouldn't it be harder for you in the end?! (laughs)

Sano

You do have a point...this might sound repetitive, but we've made this game so that it's easier for players to find its charms they might have missed when they played the original, even if they've given up mid-way when they played the Nintendo 64 version. If you had some bitter experiences with the Nintendo 64 version...

Iwata

...you especially recommended this game to those that have had bitter experiences in the Nintendo 64 version?

Sano

Yes, that's what I'm trying to say! I personally had some sour and bitter experiences with the Nintendo 64 version, and the 3DS version successfully made me overcome them. So I hope players that are still lingering on their bitter experiences in the Nintendo 64 version will have a chance to

experience the moment they overcome those feelings they had in the past.



Iwata

So you're telling them to experience that refreshing feeling by playing the renewed Majora's Mask 3D?

Sano

That's right. Also, I believe that some people that have never played the game before may be on the fence about playing after hearing rumors that Majora's Mask is a very challenging game. We've made some adjustments to make the gameplay experience feel smoother, so please don't shy away. Give it a shot if you're interested.

Aonuma

This time, you can solve challenges by not giving up!

Sano

If you try hard enough, you can reach the end of the game.

Iwata

In other words, it's still challenging, but you can overcome those challenges if you keep trying.

Sano

Right. I think you'll really cherish those moments when you go "Wow, I'm awesome!"

Iwata

Next up, Yamamura-san.

Yamamura

I think this is a highly satisfying game that wouldn't let down even the fans of the Nintendo 64 version. In addition to that, new players shouldn't feel that unreasonable hopelessness when they face challenges in this game. We've made it a really enjoyable experience, so I hope you'll play this as a brand new Zelda experience. There were many interesting elements already in the Nintendo 64 version, but GREZZO's development team included even more fun elements and...

Ooiwa

Um, I was actually planning to comment on that! (laughs)



Oh, sorry!

Yamamura

I guess both of you wanted to talk about the same thing! (laughs)

Aonuma

(laughs)

Everyone

Then I'll leave the rest to you, Mr. Ooiwa.

Ooiwa

Okay. Just as Yamamura-san was saying, our staff has included many new elements to this game. So I'm pretty sure that even those that have played the Nintendo 64 version will be surprised about the new things that were added. I hope players who own the New Nintendo 3DS XL³⁰ will have a fun time discovering new things by using the C-stick.³⁰ Owners of the original Nintendo 3DS system can enjoy this feature using the Circle Pad Pro accessory (sold separately).

Iwata

Looks like Aonuma-san's request to be able to move the camera with the C-Stick will come in handy while exploring.

Ooiwa

Right. The game, Majora's Mask 3D, runs on a three-day system, so you'll be repeating the same days over and over again. You might discover things you didn't notice on the first cycle during your second cycle, and you might keep finding more discoveries when you continue on your third and fourth cycles. It's one of those games that gives off more flavor the more you sink your

teeth into it, so I hope you fully enjoy this experience that no other game



can offer.

Iwata

Thank you very much Ooiwa-san. To close it off, I'll leave it to you, Aonuma-san.

Aonuma

When I finished creating Majora's Mask for the Nintendo 64, I assumed that other companies would be releasing games similar to this one. But in reality, no one did.

Iwata

I certainly haven't seen anything like this anywhere else.

Aonuma

Even 15 years after the Nintendo 64 version of this game released, no one created a game like this. Because of this, the unique taste and feel of this game seems to exist for a long time...

Iwata

So, a game that's timeless?

Aonuma

I believe so. So even if people of this generation play this game, I think they can find something that will call out to their hearts, and have a fresh experience that they can gain something from. So I hope many people will play this game, to have an experience that can only be gained by playing Majora's Mask 3D.

Iwata

By the way, there were some unexpected confessions made by Aonuma-san today...

Aonuma

Yes! (laughs)

Iwata

But I was glad that you were able to "open the lid" again.

Aonuma

I agree. I'm really glad I did. I was fortunate to work with great developers, and thanks to this experience, I've overcome some of my personal bittersweet experiences.

Iwata

So Sano-san's bitter experience as a player, and your bitter experience as a developer have disappeared after this experience! (laughs)

Aonuma

That's right. My traumas from 15 years ago have finally disappeared!



(laughs)

Iwata

I also believe that by playing Majora's Mask 3D, many people would now fully understand the appeal of this game. Thank you all for your hard work



on this long-term project.

Everyone

Thank you very much.